

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9614
INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USMISSION USBERLIN
USMISSION NATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L BONN 11216

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, WB, UK, UR, US, FR
SUBJECT: RUDOLF HESS: BRITISH PROPOSAL

BEGIN SUMMARY: ACTING ON INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE FCO,
WHICH IN TURN IS UNDER PARLIAMENTARY PRESSURE ON THE
HESS MATTER, THE UK REP TO THE BONN GROUP HAS ASKED
ALLIED VIEWS ON THE FCO'S SUGGESTION THAT UK
AMBASSADOR WRIGHT RAISE THE MATTER OF HESS' NON-
REPENTANCE WITH SOVIET AMBASSADOR ABRASIMOV. UNDER THE
UK PROPOSAL, WRIGHT WOULD ARGUE THAT HESS IS DENIED AN
OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS HIS NAZI PAST WITH HIS SON AND
THEREFORE IS UNABLE TO SAY HE IS SORRY FOR HIS PAST MISDEEDS.
WRIGHT WOULD THEN PROPOSE THAT HESS BE ALLOWED TO DISCUSS THIS
MATTER WITH HIS SON. OUR VIEW IS THAT THIS IDEA HAS NO CHANCE OF
SUCCESS, COULD BE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE, AND SHOULD NOT BE
ENCOURAGED. ACTION REQUESTED: GUIDANCE. END SUMMARY.

1. AT A TRIPARTITE BONN GROUP MEETING ON JULY 5, UK REP (HARPER)
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SUGGESTED ON INSTRUCTIONS THAT HESS BE QUESTIONED TO DETERMINE
WHETHER HE REPENTS OF HIS NAZI PAST. SHE SAID THAT MINISTER OF STATE
JUDD HAS NOTED THAT THE SOVIETS GENERALLY REJECT ALLIED DEMARCHES
SEEKING HESS' RELEASE WITH THE REMARK THAT HE IS NOT EVEN
REPENTANT. THE FCO HAS SUGGESTED THAT THE UK AMBASSADOR TO THE
FRG, WIRGHT, SHOULD POINT OUT TO SOVIET AMBASSADOR TO THE GDR,
ABRASIMOV, THAT IT IS INCONSISTENT TO MAKE THIS ARGUMENT WHILE

DENYING HESS THE OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS HIS PAST WITH VISITORS (E.G., HIS SON). THE FCO SUGGEST THAT WRIGHT DO SO AT A LUNCHEON WITH ABRASIMOV SCHEDULED FOR JULY 19 AND ASK THAT HESS' SON BE ALLOWED TO DISCUSS THE NAZI PAST WITH HIS FATHER AND TO ASK IF HE IS REPENTANT. (HESS' SON REQUESTED PERMISSION TO DO THIS IN A MAY 27 LETTER TO THE SPANDAU GOVERNORS.) IF THE SON IS NOT ACCEPTABLE TO THE SOVIETS, THE UK IS PREPARED TO ACCEPT OTHER POSSIBILITIES. THE FCO HAS RECOMMENDED TO UK EMBASSY BONN (IN A MESSAGE WHICH WRIGHT HAS NOT YET SEEN) THAT, IF ABRASIMOV MAKES THE NON-REPENTANCE ARGUMENT, WRIGHT SHOULD MAKE THE ABOVE POINTS. THE FCO SAID THAT IF THE BONN GROUP AGREED THE APPROACH WAS WORTHWHILE, WRIGHT SHOULD RAISE THE QUESTION ON HIS OWN INITIATIVE. IN EITHER CASE, WRIGHT WOULD BE SPEAKING FOR THE UK ONLY, NOT FOR ALL THREE ALLIES. AS BACKGROUND, HARPER SAID THAT WHEN JUDD MADE THE APRIL 29 UK DEMARCHE ON HESS TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR, THE LATTER COUNTERED (PRESUMABLY INTER ALIA) WITH THE NON-REPENTANCE ARGUMENT.

2. BOTH THE FRENCH REP (GAUSSOT) AND THE US REP WERE COOL TO THE IDEA. GAUSSOT OBSERVED THAT IF HESS WERE TRULY REPENTANT, HE COULD AT ANY TIME MAKE THIS KNOWN TO THE PRISON COMMANDANTS. THE US REP SAID THAT THE "NON-REPENTANCE" ARGUMENT IS ONLY ONE OF SEVERAL THE SOVIETS HAVE EMPLOYED, THAT SUCH AN APPROACH TO ABRASIMOV WOULD HAVE LITTLE CHANCE OF SUCCESS AND THAT THE SOVIETS WOULD HARDLY ACCEPT HESS' SON AS A RELIABLE MESSENGER OF HIS FATHER'S STATE OF MIND. IN THE UNLIKELY EVENT THAT THE

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SOVIETS WOULD ACCEPT THE PROPOSAL, THEY WOULD BE MORE LIKELY TO PROPOSE THAT HESS BE INTERVIEWED BY AN ALLIED BOARD (E.G., THE FOUR GOVERNORS) AND THAT HESS, WHO TOLD FORMER GOVERNOR BIRD THAT HE WOULD SERVE UNDER HITLER AGAIN IF HE HAD A SECOND CHANCE, WOULD BE MORE LIKELY TO SHOW AN UNREGENERATE THAN A REPENTANT ATTITUDE. THIS WOULD MAKE IT EVEN MORE DIFFICULT FOR US TO DEAL WITH THE SOVIETS ON IMPROVEMENTS FOR HESS AND INCREASE THE PUBLIC PRESSURE ON THE ALLIES.

3. IN RESPONSE TO SEVERAL QUESTIONS, HARPER ADMITTED THAT JUDD WANTS TO DO SOMETHING WITH REGARD TO HESS, PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF THE PARLIAMENTARY PRESSURE ON THE FCO, AND THAT THIS PROPOSAL IS THE RESULT. SHE ADMITTED THAT THE UK EMBASSY HERE DOES NOT SEE MUCH LIKELIHOOD OF SUCCESS. HARPER SAID THAT SHE WAS INSTRUCTED TO POSE THE QUESTIONS: (1) WHETHER THE OTHER ALLIES BELIEVE SUCH AN APPROACH SHOULD BE MADE AND, IF SO, (2) WHETHER IT SHOULD BE AT THE WRIGHT/ABRASIMOV LEVEL OR SOME OTHER.

4. COMMENT: FOR THE REASONS NOTED ABOVE, WE CONSIDER THIS A PARTICULARLY SILLY SUGGESTION, ONE WHICH HAS ITS ORIGIN IN BRITISH PARLIAMENTARY PRESSURES ON THE FCO. THE FCO SPECIFICALLY

ASKED THAT THE US AND FRENCH REFER THE MATTER TO CAPITALS FOR INSTRUCTIONS AND WE ARE SO DOING. WE RECOMMEND THAT WHILE WE NOT SEEK TO DISSUADE AMBASSADOR WRIGHT FROM RESPONDING TO ABRASIMOV'S ARGUMENT ALONG THE LINES THE FCO SUGGESTS, WE SHOULD TELL THE UK EMBASSY HERE THAT THE IDEA IS ILL-ADVISED AND THAT THE USG IS NOT PREPARED TO COMMEND THE COURSE OR TO FOLLOW IT.

5. ACTION REQUESTED: GUIDANCE.
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